A Brief Eſſay concerning the

INDEPENDENCY

OF

Church-Power.

THAT the non-complying Biſhops and Clergy were at the Revolution duly authorized in their reſpective Charges, is by none denyed; that they have not as yet been deprived by a Synod of Biſhops, or had any Eccleſiaſtical Cenſure paſſed againſt them, is equally evident. For tho' there were ſome Biſhops in the Upper Houſe, when the Act of Deprivation paſſed againſt their Brethren; yet their Votes (ſuppoſing them Legal) were Foreign to their Character; and given in virtue of a meerly Civil Capacity; they voted not as Biſhops, but as Lords of Parliament: And ſince the Right by which they ſit is a Lay-privilege; the Acts which they do, in conſequence of ſuch a Privilege, muſt be of the ſame Secular Nature; the Caſe ſtanding thus, the Queſtion is,

Whether an Act of Parliament, ſuppoſing it legally Conſtituted; can void an Eccleſiaſtical Authority, and unmake the Governors of the Church?

I ſhall briefly undertake to maintain the Negative, by

Jeremy Collier

A Brief Eſſay concerning the

INDEPENDENCY

OF

Church-Power.

THAT the non-complying Biſhops and Clergy were at the Revolution duly authorized in their reſpective Charges, is by none denyed; that they have not as yet been deprived by a Synod of Biſhops, or had any Eccleſiaſtical Cenſure paſſed againſt them, is equally evident. For tho' there were ſome Biſhops in the Upper Houſe, when the Act of Deprivation paſſed againſt their Brethren; yet their Votes (ſuppoſing them Legal) were Foreign to their Character; and given in virtue of a meerly Civil Capacity; they voted not as Biſhops, but as Lords of Parliament: And ſince the Right by which they ſit is a Lay-privilege; the Acts which they do, in conſequence of ſuch a Privilege, muſt be of the ſame Secular Nature; the Caſe ſtanding thus, the Queſtion is,

Whether an Act of Parliament, ſuppoſing it legally Conſtituted; can void an Eccleſiaſtical Authority, and unmake the Governors of the Church?

I ſhall briefly undertake to maintain the Negative, by

Jeremy Collier

ſhewing the Churches Power to be diſtinct from, and independent of the State.

But, to prevent miſ-conſtruction, I deſire to be underſtood, that by Church Power, I mean only that which is purely Spiritual: And that Eccleſiaſtics, as ſuch, can make no direct or indirect claim to any other. And therefore,

Firſt, They are no leſs the Subjects of Princes than the Laity.

Secondly, Their meerly Secular Eſtates, their Civil Privileges and Juriſdictions, are all under the Cognizance of the State; of which they may be legally (though not always equitably) diſſeized, whenever the Legiſlative Authority of a Kingdom ſhall think fit to do it: Having premiſed this, I ſhall endeavour to prove their Independency in things purely relating to their Function.

1. From the Original of Eccleſiaſtical Authority.
2. From the End and Deſign of it.
3. From the Practice of the Primitive Church.

1. From the Original of Eccleſiaſtical Authority. The Power of Governing the Church, and performing the Offices of Religion, is neither any Gift of the People, nor held by Commiſſion from Kings and Princes: It ſprings from a greater Original, and derives no lower than Heaven it ſelf. Our Bleſſed Saviour, who Redeemed the Church, was pleaſed to ſettle the Adminiſtration of it by his own Appointment: From Him the Apoſtles received Authority to teach and govern ſuch as were Converted by them; the Words of their Commiſſion are plain, and expreſſed with all imaginable Advantage. *As my Father hath ſent me, even ſo ſend I you; whoſoever ſins ye remit, they are remitted*, &c. St. *John* 20. 21, 23. Upon this Account the Apoſtles are called *the Ambaſſadors and Miniſters of Chriſt*, 1 Cor. 4. 1. And the People are commanded *to obey and ſubmit themſelves to thoſe* who have this Spiritual Authority, *Heb.* 13. 17. Neither was this Power to expire with the Apoſtles, but to be conveyed by Succeſſion through all Ages of the World; there being the ſame cauſe for its Continuance, as for its firſt Inſtitution: And accordingly we find from St. *Paul*, that one reaſon of his giving *Titus* the Super-intendency of *Crete*, was, *to Ordain Elders in every City*, Tit. 1. 5. Thus *Clemens Romanus* (1 Ep. *ad Cor.*) tells us, the Apoſtles in their Travels uſed to

Ordain

Ordain Biſhops, &c. for the advantage of ſuch as were only Chriſtians in proſpect, as well as for thoſe who were already converted. And thus the Sacred Order has been continued without interruption for near 1700 Years: Now our Saviour, we know, was no Temporal Prince. He refuſed to interpoſe in a caſe of Property; and declared expreſly, that his Kingdom was not of this World, St. *Luke* 12. 14. St. *John* 18. 36. From whence 'tis plain, that the Authority which our Saviour gave the Church, can have no dependance upon the State, becauſe it was never derived from thence. 'Tis true, all Power, both Sacred and Civil, came originally from God; yet under the *Jewiſh*, and eſpecially under the Chriſtian Inſtitution, the Crown and Mitre have been divided: And tho' the ſame Perſons are capable of both; yet the Claim muſt be made upon a different Account, and conveyed by Titles perfectly diſtinct. And ſince the Eccleſiaſtical Authority doth not hold of the Civil Magiſtrate, it cannot be forfeited to Him: As the State cannot Conſecrate Biſhops and Prieſts, ſo neither can they recal their Character, or reſtrain them in the Exerciſe of their Function; there being no reaſon a Privilege ſhould be either extinguiſhed, or limited by thoſe who were never Maſters of the Grant: For what a Man has no Power to give, he can have no Right to take away. This will further appear, if we conſider the Means by which the Advantages of Chriſtianity are conveyed to us. Now that the Sacraments are neceſſary for this purpoſe is evident from Scripture: For concerning Baptiſm 'tis ſaid, *That except a Man be born of Water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*, St. John 3. 5. And the Lord's Supper is ſtiled by St. *Paul* (1 Cor. 10. 6.) *The Communion of the Body and Blood of Chriſt*; that is the Means by which the Benefits of Chriſt's Death are applyed to us. So that without being partakers of the Sacraments, we can have no pretence to the Covenant of Grace, no Title to the Aſſiſtance of God's Spirit; nor any Aſſurance of a Bleſſed Immortality.

Now, I ſuppoſe, none of the Laity will pretend to an Authority to Adminiſter the Sacraments: They will not challenge a Right to Seal Covenants in God's Name; or to repreſent Him in Acts of Solemn Bleſſing and Abſolution. No Man, (as the Apoſtle argues) *ought* to *take* this

Honour to *himself*, but *he that* is called *of God* as was *Aaron*, Heb. 5. 4. The Fate of *Corah* and *Uzziah*, (*Numb.* 16. 2. *Chron.* 26.) are sufficient to deter all Secular Persons from an Encroachment of this Nature; which if made, God would both punish the Usurpation, and null the Act: As a Prince would be obliged to do in point of Government, if any Person should forge a Commission in his Name. Now since the Sacraments, which are both necessary to make us Members of the Church, and to convey the Advantages of Christianity to us; are by our Saviours special Appointment entrusted with the Clergy, and the Administration of them is lodged in their Hands; from hence it follows, that those who have the sole Right of Admitting into a Society, or Excluding from it; and of dispensing the Rewards and Punishments, are the proper and only Governors of that Society; and can have no Dependance upon any other.

Secondly, The Independency of Ecclesiastical Authority may be proved from the End and Design of it.

I suppose I need not prove that the Christian Religion, as contained in the New Testament, is the last Revelation which God intends to make to the World. Now this being granted, we must suppose that our Blessed Saviour Founded his Church upon such Laws, and gave it such lasting Principles of Government, as should best maintain its Continuance, and secure those important Truths He had entrusted it with. Least of all can we imagine He would build it upon a Sandy Foundation, and make it depend upon the Arbitrary Power of its Enemies. Our Saviour foresaw that all the Princes of the World would disbelieve, and many of them Persecute his Doctrine for several Ages together; and therefore would be very improper Persons to have been trusted with the Sovereign Administration of Ecclesiastical Affairs. Had the Government of the Church been derived from them, or depended upon their Allowance; Christianity had been a very short liv'd Religion, and never out-grown its Infancy. In this Case, the Publick Assemblies, Ordinations, Sacraments, and Discipline, must have lain at the Mercy of Unbelievers; and the Clergy ought not to have executed their Function, nor taken care of their Flock, unless the Civil Magi-

Magiſtrate would have given them leave. For if the Spiritual Supremacy were the Right of Princes, tho' they might poſſibly abuſe the Management of this Prerogative; yet it ought to lie abſolutely at their Diſpoſal, and under their Regulation: And for any Perſon to meddle in Eccleſiaſtical Matters without a Commiſſion from them, but eſpecially againſt their Commands, would be an open Violation of their Right; which no Man ought to be guilty of, tho' for the ſupport of the beſt Religion; becauſe *we ought not to do Ill that Good may come of it.* And ſince no Society can ſubſiſt without Government and Diſcipline; if the Biſhops could Exerciſe no Spiritual Authority without a Lay-permiſſion, it would be in the Civil Magiſtrates Power to make the Perpetuity of the Church impracticable; and the Chriſtian Religion would depend upon the pleaſure of the Prince. But beſides the Abſurdity of this way of Reaſoning, we have in the

Third Place, The Practice of the Apoſtles, and of the whole Primitive Church, to prove, that the Eccleſiaſtical Authority was perfectly *ſui juris*, and never under the Controul of the Secular Magiſtrate. Thus when the Sanhedrim of the *Jews*, who acted by the Authority of the *Romans*, and had the Aſſiſtance of the Captain of the Temple; when they Impriſoned the Apoſtles, and *commanded them not to ſpeak at all, nor teach in the Name of Jeſus*, Act. 4. 19. to this their Anſwer is plain and poſitive; *whether it be right in the ſight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye*, verſe 20. that is to ſay, they had a Commiſſion from Heaven to preach the Goſpel, which they were bound to execute; and which no Temporal Juriſdiction had any Authority to revoke. Whereas had the Church been under the Check of the State in Matters purely Spiritual, St. *Peter* and St. *John* were much to blame for refuſing to obey their Superiors; they ought to have acquieſced in the Sanhedrims Prohibition, and not to have purſued their Function after they were ſo ſolemnly ſilenc'd; and that by thoſe whom themſelves owned to be *Rulers of the People*, Act. 4. 8. Either therefore the Church muſt be Conſtituted Independent of the State; or the Apoſtles can never be cleared of the Charge of Sedition.

The ſame Imputation will, upon the Modern Principles, affect the Biſhops of the Univerſal Church for the firſt 300 Years; who held publick Aſſemblies, Governed their Clergy, and their People, and perform'd all parts of their Office, not only without any Authority from their reſpective Princes, but often contrary to their expreſs Commands; which matter of Fact is ſo well known, that it would be ſuperfluous to enlarge upon the proof of it.

If it be ſaid, that theſe were Heathen Princes, but when the Emperors became part of the Church, the Caſe was otherwiſe.

To this I anſwer, That the change of the Emperor's Religion could not gain them any ſuch new Juriſdiction as is pretended. For as Magiſtracy in general does not imply a Right to Spiritual Authority; ſo neither does the denomination of Chriſtian give it any ſuch Advantage. For, I ſuppoſe, Spiritual Dominion is no more founded in Grace, than Temporal. In ſhort, if Princes receive any ſuch Authority by virtue of their Chriſtianity, it muſt be conveyed either by Revelation, or implied in the notion of Baptiſm.

As to the Point of Revelation; The Scripture no where teaches us, that Princes, upon their turning Chriſtian, ſhould have their Commiſſion enlarged with the addition of Epiſcopal, or Prieſtly Power. I grant, it was foretold, *that Kings ſhould be nurſing Fathers to the Church*, Iſa. 49. 23. but then it is added, that *they ſhall bow down to Her with their Faces towards the Earth*; and elſewhere, *that they ſhall Miniſter to Her, or ſerve Her*, Iſa. 60. 10. We ſee therefore, we muſt not ſtrain upon the Letter in theſe Expreſſions; nor preſs the Metaphor too far, unleſs we will conclude Contradictions: Therefore the Character of their being Nurſing Fathers, is ſufficiently fulfilled by their affording Chriſtians Protection and Encouragement under their Government, and by finiſhing the Contempt of Religion. But that the Magiſtrates Converſion ſhould alter the Seat of Eccleſiaſtical Government, put a Period to the Apoſtolical Succeſſion, and diſſolve the Church into the State, is not ſo much as the leaſt hinted.

And

And as for Baptiſm, there is no Authority of any kind implied in the Receiving that Sacrament; If there were, every Chriſtian would have an equal ſhare in this Privilege; which would make the Conſtitution of the Church monſtrous, in which all its Members would be Governors, and ſo none under an Obligation of being governed.

If it is objected, that the *Oxford* Greek Manuſcript, publiſhed the laſt Year, has proved by a Collection of ſeveral Inſtances, that Biſhops, though unjuſtly deprived, have for the ſake of Peace, laid down their Function, and not conteſted their Right with their Succeſſors, provided they were not Hereticks: And that the People made no ſcruple to Communicate with the New Biſhops.

To this it may be returned, that this Manuſcript has been lately undertaken, and ſhewn to be altogether unſerviceable to the Publiſher's Deſign. (Vid. *A Vindication of the Deprived Biſhops*, &c.) where the Learned Vindicator has proved.

Firſt, that though the Inſtances alledged in the Manuſcript were applicable to the preſent Diſpute, they would fall far ſhort of gaining the Cauſe. I ſhall juſt mention ſome of his Reaſons.

He hath ſhewn the Author of the Manuſcript to be defective in point of Antiquity, and little more than 400 *Years Old; and that none of the Inſtances riſe higher than the fourth Century; that they are not univerſal in reſpect of Place, all of them being confin'd to the Greek Church; and moſt to the ſingle See of* Conſtantinople. *Farther, the Learned Vindicator obſerves, that the Precedents cited by the Manuſcript are nakedly repreſented, without ſhewing, whether the People, who deſerted the Deprived Biſhops, believed them unjuſtly Deprived. If they did not, 'tis no wonder they withdrew their Obedience: Neither do his Inſtances prove, that the People thought them tried by an incompetent Authority, as well as unjuſtly deprived. Now this ought to have been proved, to have made the Manuſcript ſerviceable to the Publiſhers purpoſe. For, though an unjuſt Sentence ought to be ſubmitted to, when pronounced by a proper Judge;*

Judge; yet when the Cauſe does not lie within the Cognizance of the Court, all the Proceedings are null and void.

It ſhould have been made out, that the Biſhops inſiſted on their Right, and challenged Submiſſion from their People; for if they acquieſced, the Caſe does not come up to the Matter in Hand. But here the Manuſcript fails, as it does alſo in clearing, whether the Behaviour of the Biſhops and People was founded upon Principles at that time owned. For, if want of due Information, or Fear, or Intereſt made them act as they did; we have no reaſon to be governed by their Examples.

The Vindicator proceeds to give in Counter-evidence, and proves from St. Cyprian, *who diſputes the Caſe of Schiſm at large, and lived in an Age very valuable for Antiquity and Integrity; That the Catholick Church maintained the Right of Canonical Biſhops, both againſt Secular Magiſtrates, and Schiſmatical Intruders. As appear'd in the Caſe of* Cornelius *Biſhop of* Rome, *who was owned by the whole Church; notwithſtanding the Oppoſition made by* Decius *the Emperor, and* Novatian *the Anti-biſhop. And* Martian *Biſhop of* Arles *was refuſed the Communion of his Brethren, for owning that of Schiſmaticks. He obſerves, that the Principles inſiſted on by St.* Cyprian, *were not peculiar to his own Age, but maintained likewiſe by St.* Auguſtin, *and* Optatus, *in their Diſputes againſt the Donatiſts.*

The Vindicator purſues the Argument, and proves, *the Anti-biſhops and their Adherents guilty of Hereſy; for the avoiding of which, the Author of the Manuſcript himſelf allows ſeparation to be juſtifiable and neceſſary: this charge he preſſeth upon them, not only becauſe they defend their Novelties by Principles, but by ſuch Principles, as ſtrike at the Root of Eccleſiaſtical Government. For, their being Biſhops ſuppoſes all Spiritual, as well as Civil Authority derived from the State; which Doctrines make it impoſſible for the Church to ſubſiſt in a time of Perſecution. And ſince no Society, whether Spiritual or Secular, can ſtand without an intrinſick Power of Government; and the Advantages of Society cannot be had any longer than the Society whence they ariſe continues. From hence it follows, that thoſe Opinions which deſtroy any Society, muſt deſtroy all thoſe Advantages, which were deſign'd in the Conſtitution, and guarded by it. Such Tenents, when they relate to the Church,*

Church, may, with propriety enough be called Fundamental Errors; which brings them under the Modern, and received notion of Hereſy.

The Learned Vindicator, in the ſecond part of his Book, goes on, and ſhows, *that though the* Oxford *Manuſcript (how favourable ſoever) would have been a very ſlender Defence for the Anti-biſhops, and their Party; yet they have not ſo much as the Countenance of this Record; the Inſtances produced being Foreign to the preſent Controverſy. For in all the Caſes mentioned in this Manuſcript (excepting that of* Callinicus, *which is dubious, and not to their purpoſe;) either the Deprivations were paſſed in an Eccleſiaſtical Synod; or were grounded upon Reſignation; or Hereſy; or elſe the Deprived Biſhops inſiſted upon their Right; and with their People formed diſtinct Communions from their Intruders. And thus in the Courſe of 900 Years, which is the length of the Manuſcript; they have not one Inſtance to prove, that a Lay-Deprivation had any Force againſt the Spiritual Authority of the Church. So ſingular, as well as deſtructive are the Principles our Adverſaries eſtabliſh themſelves upon.*

Laſtly, The Learned Vindicator ſubjoins a Collection of Canons drawn from thoſe called the Apoſtles, from the Council of Gangra, Antioch, Carthage, *and* Conſtantinople, *which in all rational Conjecture were added by the Author of the Manuſcript, though omitted by the Publiſher. In theſe Canons 'tis ſolemnly Decreed,*

That if any Deacon, or Prieſt, ſhould deſpiſe their Biſhop, and hold ſeparate Meetings from him, unleſs he were deprived by a Synod, they were to be degraded: This Fault in the Laity was puniſhed with Excommunication. And if a Biſhop withdrew Communion from his Metropolitan (unleſs Synodically deprived) he was to be depoſed. By all which we may underſtand, how far theſe Councils were from ſuppoſing that the Civil Magiſtrate had any Power to deprive Eccleſiaſticks of their Spiritual Authority.

Theſe are ſome of the Heads upon which the Learned Vindicator proceeds; and which he maintains with admirable ſtrength of Reaſon and Authority. If the Reader is inclin'd to ſee the Argument purſu'd at Length, and

with its juſt Advantages, he may pleaſe to conſult his excellent Diſcourſe.

From the Independency of the Church thus proved, theſe Concluſions naturally follow.

Firſt, That it is no more in the Power of the State to deprive the Church Governors of their purely Spiritual Authority, than it is in the Power of the Church to remove the Magiſtracy, or diſincorporate the State. For all Puniſhment and Cenſure ſuppoſes Juriſdiction in the Perſon who inflicts it. But this Suppoſition is inconſiſtent with the Notion of Independency: Thoſe who are Independent being in this ſenſe equal, ſo far as their Independency reaches; and have no Privileges to Command, or Duties to Obey on either ſide. From whence it follows,

Secondly, That the Biſhops, notwithſtanding the Lay-Deprivation, have the ſame Spiritual Authority they formerly had; and their People the ſame Obligation to remain in their Communion. The Conſequence of which is,

Thirdly, That the Anti-biſhops who are poſſeſſed of their Sees, have no Authority to Govern. Theſe the People are bound to avoid upon the Score of Intruſion and Schiſm. I ſay, upon the Score of Schiſm. For ſince they have ſubjected the Power of the Keys to the Civil Supremacy; given up, as much as in them lies, the Fundamental Rights of the Church, and made the Being of Religion precarious, and dependent on the Pleaſure of the Magiſtrate: Since they have either Uſurped the Authority of Lawful and Canonical Biſhops, or own'd thoſe who are guilty of ſuch Invaſions; the Charge of Schiſm and Separation muſt lie at their own Doors. Such dangerous Innovations as theſe, as long as they are maintained, muſt cut off all Religious Correſpondence, and make Communion impracticable. Inſomuch that thoſe who joyn with the Intruders, will juſtly fall under the ſame Imputation of Schiſm, for revolting from their Lawful Biſhops, and making themſelves One with thoſe who are divided from the Church.

Fourthly, This Privilege of Independency, in Matters purely

purely Spiritual, will reach the Inferior Clergy. For their Authority being derived from the Biſhops, and of the ſame Nature with theirs, it can be ſubordinate, or rela ted, to no other Head of Juriſdiction: And therefore theſe can be no more diſcharged the Exerciſe of their Function by a Lay Power than the Biſhops.

Thus we ſee Communion with the pretended Church of *England* muſt be Unlawful, even ſuppoſing the Law-Authority unexceptionable, and that the Church-Service remain unaltered.

However, let us put the Caſe (for we may ſuppoſe any thing,) that the depriving Authority was it ſelf defective, and illegal, and no leſs a Breach of the Conſtitution, than an Encroachment upon the Church: Suppoſe farther, that the Publick Prayers are ſtuffed with Immoral Petitions; that God is made a Party to Injuſtice; and invoked to proſper that which He hath threatned to puniſh: Such ſingular Mixtures as theſe muſt give the Service a very ill Complexion, and make Devotion look like a ſolemn Iniquity.

To ſay, we dont joyn in the exceptionable Petitions is no anſwer.

Firſt, Becauſe the Notion of Communion, the Prayers in their Form and Rubrick, ſuppoſe the contrary.

Secondly, If we may joyn in Communion where ſome part of the Worſhip is ſinful; then, by Parity of Reaſon, we may Communicate with all Sorts of Chriſtians; and not only ſo, but with *Jews* and *Mahometans*; becauſe all theſe Diviſions of Religion acknowledge the ſame God, and have many things which are pious and commendable in their Worſhip. But this part of the Argument, having receiv'd Satisfaction from a good Hand already, needs not be purſued any farther.

I ſhall therefore make two or three Remarks, and ſo conclude.

Firſt, This Spiritual Independency of the Church can

give no juſt grounds of Jealouſie to the State. Princes need not to be awaken'd into any Suſpicions of being diſturbed in their Adminiſtrations, or having any part of their Prerogative wreſted from them; this Privilege pretends to no Temporal Juriſdiction, but leaves all the Branches of Juſtice and Property to the Civil Magiſtrate. It never offers to ſupport it ſelf by violence, but gives up Seditious Church-men to the Correction of the State, as well as others: It allows no Liberty to Dethrone Princes for misfortunes of Belief; It teaches no Man to be Falſe and Treacherous for the ſake of Religion, nor founds any Merit upon Ingratitude and Rebellion. In ſhort, this Authority relates only to Conſcience: And tho' it may challenge Obedience within a proper compaſs; and the contempt of it will be deeply reveng'd hereafter; yet ſince there is no Force claim'd for the Execution of its Cenſures, it muſt be perfectly inoffenſive here.

Secondly, Since even the Inferior Clergy are, with reſpect to their Spiritual Authority, Independent of Princes; certainly private Perſons, tho' never ſo conſiderable, ſhould allow them the ſame Advantage. Churchmen, we ſee, have their Authority from God; and are therefore his Miniſters, not the Peoples; the Branches of their Office, ſuch as Inſtruction, Abſolution, and Bleſſing, imply Super-intendency, and Power, and ought not to come under a ſervile Character. For, as on the one ſide, 'tis a fault to grow vain upon their *Relation*, to neglect the meaneſt Chriſtian, or, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, to behave themſelves *as Lords over God's Heritage*, 1 S.Pet. 5. 3. So 'tis no leſs on the other, to proſtitute their Function to *Greatneſs*; and make themſelves Servants to *Ceremony* and *State*. And without doubt they may find other ways of paying a due Regard to Perſons, without making themſelves and Religion ridiculous. Neither will the Conſideration of Mony, or Entertainment degrade their Character, and make them *BELONG* to thoſe of whom they receive it. For Money is given to Parents, to Princes, and to God himſelf; and therefore does not always ſuppoſe Subjection in the Receiver. When *Micah* contracted with the *Levite* to perform the Offices of Religion in his Family; he was far from thinking he entertain'd

tain'd a Servant; as we may ſee, Judges 17. 10. *Dwell with me, and be unto me a Father, and a Prieſt, and I will give thee ten Shekels of Silver*, &c. And as for the Obligation, St. *Paul* thought there was a fair Equivalent returned; as we may perceive by his Queſtion. *If we have ſown unto you ſpiritual things, is it a great thing, if we ſhall reap your carnal things?* 1 Cor. 9. 11. Indeed the notion of a Prieſt ſuppoſes a peculiar, and incommunicable Relation to God Almighty: And in this ſenſe, Natural, as well as Revealed Religion has underſtood it; the Roman Emperors, tho' they were vain enough, yet never pretended to have Prieſts *BELONG* to them till they were dead, and Deified. And if any are ſo extravagant as to exceed the Pride of a Heathen Emperor, tho' in Charity we ought to pray for them; yet I am afraid 'tis to little purpoſe to pray with them.

Thirdly, The Clergy ought to form Aſſemblies for the Service of God: Since our late Brethren have diſpoſſeſſed us of our own Churches, and made it Impracticable to come to theirs. Since Violence has removed us from the one, and Schiſm from the other: Since we are baniſhed the Holy Ground, and driven from the *Place* where God's *Honour* uſed to *dwell*. Since we cannot perform his Worſhip with thoſe Circumſtances of Advantage, with that Magnificence and Solemnity which were to be wiſhed; let us carry the Opportunity as far as it will reach; and do our Duty in the beſt manner we can. God, as the Scripture ſpeaks, *is not* confined *to Temples made with Hands*. In a ſtate of Hardſhip, Neceſſity and Devotion may Conſecrate; and the Primitive *Upper-Room* will not be unacceptable. Above all things, let us take Care not to neglect the Service of God; leaſt we grow indifferent to all Religion, and by avoiding Schiſm, ſink into Profaneneſs; 'tis not the danger of Suffering will excuſe us: For it was in a time of Perſecution, when the Apoſtle charged the Hebrews, *not to forſake the aſſembling themſelves together*, Heb. 10, 25.

Many are the Advantages of Publick Worſhip above that which is performed in Private.

By the former we pay a more ſolemn Homage to God, and

and make a more open Acknowledgement of our Dependency. In our joint and uniform Petitions we declare the Harmony of our Judgments, and the Extent of our Charity; and that we are willing to aſſiſt each other *at the Throne of Grace*. Beſides, the Occaſion of coming, and the Example of thoſe that come, are not without their Advantage. Theſe Circumſtances are apt to keep up Attention, and improve good Diſpoſitions, and make us more affected with the Impreſſions of Religion. Farther, by our united Prayers, we may hope for a greater Support from Heaven, than from ſingle and ſolitary Devotions. It was upon Aſſemblies that the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt were beſtowed, as we may learn from ſeveral Places of Scripture, *Acts* 2, 2. 4. 31. 10. 44. And though, ſince our Religion has been fully Confirm'd, theſe extraordinary Aſſiſtances have been withdrawn: Yet when we meet in Obedience to God's Command, when we ſerve him with the greateſt Reverence and Reſolution, we may reaſonably expect a proportionable Bleſſing. And as the Publick Services are more beneficial, ſo the uſe of them can never be more neceſſary, than when the Church lies under Diſorder and Diſtreſs. When Atheiſm grows upon us; when Virtue ſeems ready to expire, and the *Faithful fall from among the Children of Men*; when Temptations have the greateſt Weight, and Perſeverance is preſſed, and we cannot maintain our Innocency without more than ordinary Difficulty; then is the proper Time to call in all the Aids of Religion, and to put our Devotions in the beſt poſture of Advantage. Upon ſuch a melancholy Occaſion, we have need, if ever, to unite our Prayers, and frequent the Sacrament, and fortify our Minds with all the Supports of mutual and ſupernatural Aſſiſtance. To ſtand off from danger, and confine our ſelves to the numbers of Security; and be frighted from Publick Communion; looks like the Conduct of an Army that diſbands at the Approach of an Enemy. The Honour of God, and the Good of the Church, are (without doubt) beſt promoted by an open Profeſſion, by Reſolution, and Religious Bravery. Thoſe who thus diſtinguiſh themſelves carry Light and Heat in their Examples. They awaken Inquiry, and encourage Imitation, and tranſfuſe a Spirit of Greatneſs into others. Now the Intereſt of another World, all Chriſtians grant to be incomparably the greateſt

greateſt, and where there is no proportion in the Value, one would think there ſhould be no difficulty in the Choice.

Let nothing therefore diſcourage us in our Duty; for whatever worldly Inconveniences may happen, we may be aſſured of the Divine Protection: And, beſides the future Rewards of Conſtancy and Patience, we ſhall have the preſent Satisfaction of Suffering for the beſt Cauſe, and the beſt Communion.

Printed in the Year, 1692.